

A Federal Government - Voluntary Sector Accord: Implications for Canada's Voluntary Sector

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February 2001

The development of an accord between the voluntary sector and the federal government is a bold experiment. There is no well charted road map that tells us exactly how to proceed or what the implications of following particular routes will be. The overarching goal of an accord is to develop “a framework to enable relations to be carried out differently and better than before.”¹ It is a framework agreement between a government and the voluntary sector that articulates a shared vision, agreed-upon principles and mutual undertakings to shape and guide their relationship.² The idea of an accord is borrowed from the UK where the Blair government has recently developed “compacts” with the voluntary sector in each of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, following somewhat different processes in each. While comparative experience is instructive in illuminating general pathways for a federal government-voluntary sector accord, we need to be cautious in relying too heavily on it, given the differences in the structures and politics of both government and the voluntary sector in Canada. Therefore, to a considerable degree, both the voluntary sector and the federal government have entered the Joint Accord Table (JAT) process on the basis of faith, hope and good intentions.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the implications of a Canadian accord for the voluntary sector. The analysis draws on comparative experience, but applies this to the JAT process. The paper argues that the desire to develop an accord has to be understood in the context of a fundamental shift in both the nature of governance at the federal level and the character of Canada's voluntary sector. In this context, we consider:

- What is the best case scenario that the voluntary sector might realize from an accord?
- What needs to be done in each of the various stages of developing an accord to bring about the best possible outcomes for the voluntary sector?

An Accord: The Big Picture

Why is the federal government so keenly interested in developing a framework agreement with the voluntary sector? Why is an accord equally important for the voluntary sector at this time? Interest in a Canadian accord is not a casually borrowed idea, but grows out of a significant change in how government works. Not only did governments get leaner in the 1990s, but they came to realize that they could not govern and deliver services on their own in a traditional unilateral, uniform manner. As the Prime Minister said at an international conference of volunteer managers in Edmonton in August 1998: “After decades of thinking otherwise, we have had to come to terms – squarely and honestly – with the truth. That governments don’t have the wisdom or the resources to do everything.”³ In many cases, not only can voluntary organizations deliver services more efficiently, but they can do so more effectively as well.

In addition, the federal government has realized that it, like many others, has lost visibility and credibility with citizens. The provinces overwhelmingly get credit for the services that most directly touch people’s lives, and transfers and tax credits have rendered the federal government’s indirect funding role in these virtually invisible. Trust in government can be rebuilt, it is assumed, by creating more social capital, that is, by building bonds of trust among citizens through participation in voluntary associations, which in turn should have a positive spin-off in increasing trust in government.⁴ The construction of social capital cannot be done by governments alone, but is a distinctive contribution of the voluntary sector. Therefore, governments need the voluntary sector more than ever, both as a partner in service delivery and in encouraging citizens to be more actively engaged in civic life. The process of governing thus needs to build stronger, more collaborative relationships with the sector and to provide the requisite policy tools that will enable the sector to fulfil its unique role in Canadian society.

During the course of the 1990s, the voluntary sector in Canada, as elsewhere, began a major transformation of its own from a model based on charity – that is, of the advantaged helping the less fortunate – to one based on civil society.⁵ The measure of a vibrant civil society is not just better services, but stronger communities and more active citizens. Although helping the disadvantaged through the provision of services remains a central part of what the sector does, there is a growing interest in helping communities help themselves, engaging in public policy dialogue, and encouraging participation by citizens. In recent years, the sector has come to recognize its distinctive strengths, act more cohesively as a sector, and begun to demand to be treated as an equal partner by governments.

The convergence of these two trends within government and within the sector has created an opportunity to establish in a more formal way the parameters of a better relationship, backed up by guides for everyday conduct that will enable the desired relationship to be achieved. The significance and potential value of an accord in shaping new relationships as these fundamental changes continue

to unfold should not be under estimated. Nor should it be over valued. An accord alone will not produce change, nor is it necessarily the primary mechanism for renewing the relationship. In many respects, an accord reflects a consolidation of the considerable change that is already underway at the departmental and governmental level in working more constructively with the sector. Without the broader infrastructure – such as stable and fair funding policies, an enabling regulatory environment, appropriate institutions to support the relationship, and opportunities for real dialogue on policy issues – an accord would be worthless.

What is an Accord?

An accord is both a framework document *and* a process. As a framework, an accord cannot be understood simply as another form of a legally binding contract. The compacts that have been established to date are not based on an articulation of rights, but on the creation of a shared vision and principles and a commitment to mutual undertakings based on responsibilities of equal partners. As a process, the development of an accord is not equivalent to labour’s collective bargaining in which a legally authorized agent negotiates on behalf of a membership and whose official ratification is required. Rather, the legitimacy of an accord for the voluntary sector springs from its endorsement by representatives who have credibility, not necessarily authority to act on behalf of the sector, and who are well positioned to help change cultures and practices. Experience clearly demonstrates that the process of getting to an agreement and the ongoing means for implementing good practices, monitoring and reporting are as important, if not more so, than the content of the document itself. The ultimate success of an accord is judged mainly on whether greater trust has been instilled on both sides and whether practices change to the satisfaction and mutual benefit of both partners.

In short, an accord is about relationship building: between the voluntary sector and government, *and* between the leadership of the voluntary sector involved in the development of the accord and the rest of the sector.

Three distinct phases are involved in development and implementation of an accord, each of which has somewhat different requirements of the two parties:

- **Phase I - Development:** involves drafting of the text of the framework agreement, engagement of the sector and government on its contents, redrafting as necessary, and formal agreement.
- **Phase II - Development of Codes of Good Practice:** involves giving substance to the framework through drafting one or more detailed guides about what constitutes good conduct for both government and the voluntary sector, engaging the sector and

government in a dialogue on the acceptability of the codes, and initial implementation of them.

- **Phase III - Monitoring, Reporting and Compliance:** involves ongoing monitoring of both sides to ensure that the framework agreement and the codes are being followed, public reporting on the state of the relationship, and addressing complaints of non-compliance.

Best Case Scenarios

An accord is not a cure-all for the chronic under-funding of voluntary organizations, the increased demand for services or the pressures of volunteer recruitment and management that many face. It does have strong potential, however, to improve the situation of voluntary organizations in three respects:

- in the everyday practices that the federal government uses in how it interacts with voluntary organizations;
- in changing the way in which government thinks about the sector; and
- in enhancing the coherence of the sector as a *sector*.

If the accord is successful in influencing everyday practice, it should encourage both “better” practices within government departments and greater consistency in practices across departments. “Better” in this context refers to practices that meet the needs and the capacities of the sector, that permit it to fulfil its potential and that are transparent and understandable. The most likely areas to see improvement are in practices related to: funding; consultation and information sharing; evaluation; and accountability and reporting requirements. The reason is that these practices are most readily codified. These areas are also the ones in which government has the most impact on the day-to-day operations of voluntary organizations.

Because the interest in an accord is part of a broader change in governance, it is also likely in a best case scenario to positively influence government’s attitudes toward the sector. The joint processes of developing and of ongoing monitoring of an accord should enhance the federal government’s understanding of the sector, its divisions and politics, potential and limitations, and thereby increase mutual trust as well. In the best case, an accord should serve to enhance the autonomy of the sector relative to government and position it as being seen by government as autonomous. Indeed, several of the existing accords officially recognize the sector’s independence up front. Central aspects of the sector’s autonomy are the ability and capacity of voluntary organizations to engage in public policy advocacy as a basic responsibility and to undertake strategic, long term planning. Therefore, an

accord will necessarily place longer term pressures on the federal government to address issues of the regulation of advocacy and stability of funding regimes. As the process of governing by relationship building unfolds, however, the federal government may become less resistant to addressing these issues, so by the time an accord is fully implemented, they may cease to be hot issues at all. By taking on explicit responsibilities and being seen as an autonomous party, the legitimacy, stature and visibility of the sector with the Canadian public might subsequently be enhanced.

The best case scenario would also see greater cohesion within the sector in the form of increased trust and understanding between the national leadership and the diversity of community based organizations. Development of an accord requires the sector to think and act like a sector, with leadership that appreciates and responds to its various layers of differing needs, interests and capacities. Through the process of engaging the grassroots in the development of an accord, the national leadership will need to demonstrate an understanding of local issues and differences, communicate this effectively to government and back to the grassroots. Over the longer term, the need to develop appropriate means for monitoring and reporting on the sector's own behaviour that is entailed in an accord should also promote the development of stronger structures for leadership at the national level and ongoing means of communication across the sector. Such monitoring will require not only informal processes of communication, but machinery of some sort. The increased self-regulation inherent in this has the potential to improve accountability practices at the sectoral level and encourage boards to provide more effective oversight and direction at the organizational level. The development of greater capacity for accountability within the sector is likely to have a positive impact on the public's already high degree of trust in the sector.

Finally, a national accord may have a positive effect on relations with provincial and municipal governments, particularly if those not already engaged in a process of building more constructive relationships choose to emulate the national accord. For many local organizations, it is at the municipal and provincial levels that the real impact of a better relationship will be felt. A national accord can serve to create expectations about the mutual benefits that can be realized through such an agreement in a way that prompts action by local communities and other governments.

Is there any evidence from the countries which have developed accord-like instruments that the impact is, in fact, positive? Although it is still too early to truly assess the effects of the original compacts in the UK, the evidence from the 2000 joint annual meeting to review England's compact (the first report following the development of Codes of Practice) provides some indication of a positive effect on how departments deal with the sector. A survey of government departments showed that 75 percent said they had seen a positive improvement in their relationships with voluntary organizations over the past year; one-third indicated that the compact had been helpful in guiding this relationship and 58 percent said it was too early to tell what effects the compact has had.⁶ Although government has improved its funding practices for the sector, the annual review indicated

that there is still considerable work to be done in the area of consultation where variation across departments remains significant. In addition, the national accord has spun off the establishment of local compacts with the result that by the end of 2000, one-third of local governments in England are covered by such agreements.

Interviews with voluntary sector leaders in Scotland indicate a somewhat greater degree of skepticism about whether the compact will actually improve practices over the long run. However, Scotland is still in the midst of a broader devolution of political institutions and is experiencing a significant shift in power from the administrative to the political level that makes it more difficult to assess short or longer term impacts. What is evident from both cases, is that it takes longer than a year or two for real effects – positive or negative – to be felt.

Worst Case Scenarios

Although the development of an accord has considerable potential to produce a more constructive relationship between the voluntary sector and the federal government and of the national level with the local level of the sector, it also has possible negative consequences. The worst case scenario of an accord is that no machinery is developed within government or the sector to coordinate or monitor responses so that government practices and attitudes toward the sector do not change. The lack of response combined with the high expectations of change that are likely to be generated during the engagement stages may produce significant strains and set the relationship back to the poor state that it was in during the early 1990s.

There is also a certain risk that a change of government could result in an abandonment of the accord, but there is sufficient time before a general election to produce some positive results and generate strong support across the public service, making it more difficult for a new government to ignore it. Perhaps the most damaging result for the national leadership of the sector arises from an inability to effectively engage local and regional levels. If those outside the immediate circle of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) do not see the relevance or benefit of a national accord, and if they sense that the leadership is wasting its time in pursuing one, the lasting perception may be that the leadership is out of touch with the sector as a whole.

What both the best and worse case scenarios reveal is that the voluntary sector and government have somewhat different stakes in the implications of an accord. Indeed, in many respects, the voluntary sector leadership has more at stake than does the federal government given its ongoing efforts to build a strong and cohesive sector. Although the potential benefits of an accord far outweigh the risks, the voluntary sector will need to ensure that its interests are respected and accommodated. In moving through the stages of accord development and implementation, there is much the sector can

learn from the experience of other countries, but the particular dynamics of the voluntary sector and government in Canada need to be recognized.

Learning from Experience, Respecting Differences

The primary experience from which Canada's experiment with a framework agreement can draw upon is that of the UK where similar compacts have been developed between the voluntary sector and the national government, each using slightly different approaches.⁷ In addition, accord-like provisions that create responsibilities on the part of governments to develop better practices toward the sector have been initiated by governments in the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, Quebec and Newfoundland. An important lesson from the experiences of these other jurisdictions is that the structure of the voluntary sector and its historical relationship with government is key in working out appropriate processes for developing and monitoring an accord. Although these comparative experiences are instructive for the JAT, they cannot be transplanted directly in the current context given differences in both the sector and the nature of government. A brief review of these experiences is useful, however, in highlighting specific issues that may arise in the Canadian context.

The Compact of England

The first compact to be developed, that of England, was the result of a primarily sector-led process, although the sector had strong support from the very beginning from the Prime Minister and the Labour party. The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO,) England's largest and most encompassing national umbrella group, took responsibility for a Government Relations Working Group that was charged with the task of drafting and negotiating a compact. The Group was comprised of representatives of other national umbrella organizations and chaired independently by Sir Kenneth Stowe, a former senior public servant. In understanding the NCVO's role in the compact, it is important to keep in mind that the organization is much better resourced than most of Canada's national umbrellas, with an annual budget equivalent to more than \$8.4 million Cdn and a staff of over 20. The lead of the NCVO gave the process instant credibility, but it was also essential to involve other national organizations. Because certain parts of the sector question the legitimacy of NCVO to act as *the* national voice for the sector, the real legitimacy of the process had to come from the engagement of the broad span of the sector. Consequently, the largest consultation that the sector has ever seen was held on a draft of the compact. A reference of 67 members representing diverse parts of the sector was also established to serve as a sounding board and provide ongoing advice to the Working Group. This engagement process allowed the voluntary and community sector to be very clear about what it wanted in the relationship and for community groups to ensure that this was communicated to the Working Group.

Consultation was not limited to engaging the voluntary and community sector, however. The government also consulted internally with a range of departments and agencies on the draft in order

to understand existing differences in practice, coordinate responses and build commitment for a compact.

“Negotiations” took the form of meetings between the sector’s Working Group and an Inter-Ministerial Working Group (representing 13 departments, chaired by the Home Office) with the two parties jointly drafting the final product which was presented to Parliament in November 1998. Once the breakthrough was made that there was, indeed, a shared vision between government and the sector, it became relatively easy to define principles and an agenda for action. The Working Group took an additional step in getting agreement from the opposition Conservative party so that the Compact is truly a bipartisan policy, not merely an agreement with the Labour Government.⁸

It also became apparent that, because a Compact is only a framework and has to be understood by a diversity of organizations and applicable to a variety of government departments, it could not encompass extensive and highly specific detail. Thus, the process was broken into two stages: the initial agreement on the Compact and the subsequent development of a series of codes of good practice. So far, five such codes had been developed by subgroups of the Working Group, each with government members as observers (sometimes more active) who reserved the right not to accept them. Drawing on the experience of both parties, these codes address practices related to: funding; consultation; volunteering; black and minority ethnic groups; and community action.⁹ In addition, the national compact has directly stimulated and guided the development of separate compacts between the community sector and local governments.

A key aspect of the implementation phase has focussed on making the sector aware of the compact and training them to use and comply with it effectively. To this end, NCVO has disseminated the codes widely, provided training seminars, and hired a full-time Compact Development Officer to work with community organizations in ensuring that they know what to expect.

Monitoring and reporting have been vitally important to making this non-legal document durable and transparent, although some of these processes are still unfolding. Monitoring is built around an annual report to Parliament which is preceded by an annual meeting involving members of the sector Working Group and key ministers (additional meetings with officials are held as required). The meeting is neither merely ceremonial nor a time for “naming and shaming.” Its goal is to produce an action plan with concrete steps to be taken by each side. Consequently, the process is taken seriously and attended by the important Ministers and senior officials. In preparation for this meeting, surveys are conducted of both the sector and government departments to see how well the relationship is working and what impact the compact is having. All of this takes support by both the NCVO which serves as secretariat to the Working Group and the Active Communities Unit in the Home Office which supports the government’s participation. Because the emphasis in England has been on dispute

avoidance, no specific dispute resolution mechanism is stipulated in the compact, although a more institutionalized process may unfold.

The Compact in Scotland

Scotland took a slightly different route to developing a compact. Here, the compact was developed by a joint working group consisting of representatives from the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO – Scotland’s counterpart to the NCVO), from other national umbrella groups, and from the Scottish Office. Voluntary sector leaders in Scotland had seized the opportunity created by the Labour Party’s commitment to negotiate a compact and it quickly became apparent to them and to the Blair government that there should be a separate compact for Scotland, given different state institutions and current political circumstances.¹⁰ It never really occurred to sector leaders in Scotland to work through any other means than a joint process from the beginning for several reasons. First, the development of a compact took place at a critical period in devolution of power to a Scottish Parliament from Westminster, but when it began there was only one Minister for Scotland, thus reinforcing the value of a joint process involving officials. There was a keen interest by voluntary sector leaders in building strong ties with public servants based in Scotland not only because they hold the real power, but because in anticipation of devolution, good working relationships with the bureaucracy could be extended to the political level. Second, an earlier set of compact-like agreements between the sector and local governments had fallen apart when local government was reorganized from the centre. This resulted in disappointment and a certain degree of skepticism in the sector so that it wanted government officials at the table from the beginning to ensure they were onside.

Like England, however, consultation with the diversity of the sector was important in drafting and building support for the compact, although this process worked mainly through the SCVO networks. This reflected the fact that the voluntary sector is even more highly structured in Scotland than in England. SCVO really could be considered a “peak association” and its counterpart in the volunteering subsector, Volunteer Development Scotland, was supportive of its role in the compact process. Therefore, its lead role in the compact was not contested and the breadth of the sector could be reached through its well developed, somewhat hierarchical network of local councils and organizations. Although members from the sector did not initially have high expectations of what the process would produce, the final text did yield virtually all of what they wanted. In spite of a relatively swift process of developing the compact, it took a year while the Scottish Parliament was being established for the compact to be officially endorsed, thus causing a loss in focus and momentum. As in England, supplemental codes of good practice have been produced, but in this case were developed by the Scottish Executive as guides for government departments, rather than by the sector.¹¹

Given the hiatus in the process caused by devolution, the monitoring process is just being established. As in England, this process will centre on an annual survey and meeting of government and sector representatives leading to a joint annual report that goes first to the Voluntary Sector Forum (comprised of senior government officials and sector representatives) and then to the Social Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament.¹² The other important consideration in Scotland is that relationship building through the compact is taking place in the context of a review of two of the most important aspects of the relationship – funding practices and charity law.¹³ This means that policy irritants related to funding policies, the definition of charity, or governmental institutions for supervision of the sector do not need to be funnelled through the compact and its associated mechanisms. It should also be noted that advocacy is not an issue in either Scotland or England as it is in Canada. Governments in these countries expect voluntary organizations to advocate, whether or not they are registered charities, and, in general, do little to try to regulate such activity.

Accord-Like Arrangements

The Republic of Ireland, South Africa and the provinces of Quebec and Newfoundland have also developed accord-like policies, but these are technically government policies, rather than inter-sectoral agreements.

In late 2000, Ireland issued a White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity that provides formal recognition of the voluntary and community sector in contributing to the creation of a vibrant civil society and participatory democracy.¹⁴ It also improves government practices by committing to stable funding regimes, creating units in relevant departments to support the relationship with the sector, allocating financial resources to support national networks of voluntary organizations, and supporting local fora for ongoing discussions with the sector. Although it makes many of the same commitments that a Canadian accord might, the two big differences are that the White paper is associated with a single line department, and therefore is seen to have less legitimacy or application across the sector, and its status as a framework document is regarded with some skepticism by the sector because voluntary organizations were not equal partners in creating it.

The South African experience has been extraordinary in many respects, not the least of which is a transformation from a government hostile to nonprofit organizations to a democratically elected governments that has roots in the sector.¹⁵ In the mid-1990s, provincial coalitions of voluntary organizations formed a national body, the South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO), which was designed to play a role in the development of a new social framework that a democratically elected government was expected to create. At the time, the Development Resources Centre (a organization responsible for much of the research on fundraising and philanthropy in the sector) was making a strong argument for the involvement of civil society in the development of public policy. Rather than seek an overarching accord, these organizations pushed for and succeeded in getting new targeted legislation to govern almost all the issues identified by Canada's Voluntary Sector Initiative. The

process of initiating change in South Africa has been driven by the sector, a process in which the voluntary sector at first acted on its own to a much greater degree even than in England. Its strategy was first to mobilize the sector to agree on the policy changes required, to organize themselves to voice these demands and (only) then to lobby governments to implement them. In retrospect, this strategy is seen as shortsighted by the sector. A more effective means, the DRC now believes, would have been to get some commitment from government and then sell the framework to the sector.¹⁶ Although a constructive relationship with government did eventually result, it occurred largely as a result of government approaching the sector indicating their willingness to be full partners in creating an enabling environment.

It is noteworthy that government officials at high levels in the Department of Welfare, were already making clear that government was seeking a new relationship with voluntary organizations, and proposed a way of operating for discussion by the DRC and SANGOCO. These discussions also ended up being subsumed into the development of the *Non Profit Organisations Act*. This Act governs regulation, definition, application and sanctions with regard to voluntary organizations. SANGOCO also played an important role in the creation of a National Development Agency, with a Cabinet-approved Board of Directors, and a budget funded by the South Africa government and the European Union. This budget will be allocated to South African NGOs, providing them with a more stable, institutionalized funding source.

The Quebec Experience

The Quebec government has developed a policy that sets out a new framework for its relations with the community sector. In 2000, the Minister of Social Solidarity, André Boisclair, launched a vast public consultation campaign with community organizations to discuss this proposed policy of recognition and support for community action.¹⁷ Although a government policy rather than an inter-sectoral accord, the policy was the product of ten years of lobbying and demands for recognition from the sector.

The first version of the policy, released in 1999, was highly criticized by community organizations and then redrafted. Initially, a working group composed of both ministerial and voluntary sector representatives was established to examine the wider issues about partnership that were to be addressed within the policy. The process was not successful, however, because the actors failed to engage in an open dialogue. Representatives of government had a clear idea of the kind of relationship with the sector that they wanted to carry forward – and this centred on service provision. After six months of discussions, the working group was abolished as no progress had been made towards developing a policy framework. Many of the representatives of the community sector who sat on the committee felt that rather than being engaged in a genuine dialogue with ministerial officials, they were there to be convinced and sold a particular vision of partnership. Once the working group stopped meeting, the community sector was not involved in the process until the first

draft of the policy was announced. Even the advisory committee created in 1995, comprised of representatives from different subsectors and part of whose mandate was to help push forward the policy of recognition and support, had not seen a version of the policy until its public announcement. Instead of an engagement with the sector, the policy had been based mainly on broad consultation across government ministries.

This first version of the policy was aimed at community organizations in the broadest definition and included all non-profit organizations, even the social economy organizations that had been set up by the state. Community organizations were to: respond to the policies and objectives set out by the provincial government; be accountable for their outcomes; and provide services in accordance with the norms set out by the public service. This proposition specifically targeted service-oriented organizations, mostly in the health and social services sector, because half of the community organizations work in this subsector, employing more than 16,000 people. It was a reflection of the growing demand for services on the margins of the public sector. While these organizations are integrated in the continuum of public services informally, the objective of the policy was to formalize this integration and develop a community action orientation. This came to be referred to as the government's "utilitarian" approach because it emphasized the complementary nature of services provided by the state and the sector, rather than recognizing the distinctiveness of the community organizations.

This initial version of the policy was widely criticized by the sector and failed to gain legitimacy. The policy had to be reworded in the language of the sector, rather than that of government, and a number of issues clarified in order to reflect the reality of the community sector. In the second version of the policy, the document provides a classification and lists criteria for "autonomous community organizations". This measure was seen as particularly important to the representatives of the voluntary and community sector because it recognizes the sector's independence and autonomy: the mission of organizations have to be reflections of community needs, not determined by the priorities of the state. In its view, the sector is not going to act merely as a supplement to government, but has to be a true partner. In addition, the policy includes special provisions for advocacy organizations and reaffirms and maintains separate funding for autonomous community action which is allocated through the Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome (SACA).

In the second version, the government also promises to meet and consult with the sector regularly on important policy decisions. From the perspective of government, the goal is to have community organizations actively participate as partners in its local development strategy. Over the years, the community sector in Quebec has consolidated a system of political representation through local, regional, national, and multi-sectoral roundtables and coalitions. Although organizations engage with each other through these various arenas, most of their activities are locally based and thus government is interested in promoting partnership with them because they have a strong presence both locally and

regionally across Quebec. This means that a further number of intermediary structures will be created. Even though organizations will gain some management power over local development policies, many are concerned that their presence is merely a way to legitimize governmental initiatives and to share responsibility and accountability given that public management has been fragmented regionally and locally (through the *régies régionales de la santé et des services sociaux, conseils régionaux de développement, conseils locaux de développement, etc.*).

In comparing the Quebec case, it should be kept in mind that the strength of the community sector in Quebec lies in the way it is organized. The community “movement” is locally based and groups often participate in many coalitions, organized along sectoral lines, geographical areas, clientèles or constituencies, or fields of activity. There are a number of arenas where concertation and collaboration take place which means that local organizations are aware of broader policy debates and the representatives of umbrella organizations are aware of the realities faced by groups at the grass roots level. The difficulty for the sector, however, is that because it is called upon to participate in a multitude of formal and informal fora, the burden of representation has become increasingly heavy. In fact, a number of community organizations are now reassessing their participation in various roundtables and coalitions which may have significant impacts on the strength of the sector in the future.

With respect to financing, the community sector is concerned that the Quebec government had not made any concrete commitments towards allotting new funds to the sector in either versions of its framework policy, but has simply moved existing money around. Although funding of community organizations has not decreased over the past years, and many organizations have even seen their funding go up because government has reinvested money in the community subsector while cutting back in the health and social services subsector, their service loads have increased substantially.

The Quebec case offer two important lessons for the development of an accord. The first is that a sense of openness and responsiveness is crucial. Although there is a strong history of government working with the voluntary and community sector in Quebec, the perception in this instance was that government officials had a clear vision of where they wanted to go with the policy and tried to sell that to the sector. But, the community sector was not prepared to follow this lead without modification. The second is that the formalization of a partnership with government may impose considerable demands on sector representatives to participate in a variety of roundtables and other fora. If these representatives are already part of many such collaborations within the sector, how they will participate and the structures and resources which support their participation may need to be closely evaluated.

Newfoundland's Strategic Social Plan

While the Newfoundland government and voluntary sector have not set out to reach an “accord,” they have found ways over the past five years to work together to the mutual benefit of both.¹⁸ A key actor

on the voluntary sector side was the Community Services Council(CSC) of Newfoundland and Labrador, which for more than a decade had been advocating for the establishment of a Strategic Social Plan for the province in annual meetings with the Social Policy Committee of the Newfoundland Cabinet. While the CSC does not officially or formally “represent” the voluntary sector in the province, it has demonstrated a co-operative and collaborative approach and a leadership role in pursuit of its mandate which centres on social development research, planning and service provision.

Beginning in 1988, with its first briefs to the Cabinet’s Social Policy Committee (which in the 1990s was attended by the Premier), the CSC brought to government the key messages of the importance of the voluntary sector, the strong link between economic and social development, and the need for a social plan to support both. In spite of its persistent articulation of these messages, when the 1992 Throne Speech announced the government’s intention to develop a strategic social plan, the CSC was caught somewhat by surprise. In 1993, the Executive Director of the CSC, Penelope Rowe, was invited by the province to join a strategic planning group whose other members were deputy ministers. By 1996, a public consultation paper had been prepared, with consultation to be overseen by a Social Policy Advisory Committee, on which Rowe also sat. The engagement process included not only consultations within the public service, but stakeholder sessions and public dialogue in meetings that took the Committee to all parts of the province, including remote, isolated communities. Its report on the consultations was released in 1997.

The first Strategic Social Plan (SSP) was issued in 1998, and recommended a shift to early intervention and prevention approaches in social policy, place-based development, and extensive community-capacity building.¹⁹ One of the strategies to accomplish these goals is the creation of regional steering committees whose membership includes local health and education institutions, along with community services organizations, and whose responsibilities are to apply the Plan to their own communities and make recommendations to the provincial government on particular regional initiatives that would meet the goals of the SSP. Demonstration project funding began to flow shortly afterward as well. Outstanding issues as of late 2000, according to Rowe, centred on how these regional steering committees would relate to provincial government departments and how communities would be engaged in their operations. A government commitment that will follow as part of the SSP is to undertake a social audit, drawing on community, regional, and provincial accountability measures.

Although not an official compact or accord, the process of developing the Strategic Social Plan and its unfolding shifts in both policy process and substance have combined to give voluntary organizations a more significant role in establishing social goals for the province, and in helping to meet these goals through their own increased capacity.

Lessons for the Canadian Voluntary Sector

The experience of other jurisdictions highlights that there is no one correct way to developing an accord. The main requirements are that the process build upon existing networks and institutions, broadly and inclusively engage the sector and government, and respect local circumstances. The process should aim for a win-win outcome and ensure that the sector has had the opportunity to determine and express what it wants in a relationship.

There are, however, several important differences between the other jurisdictions with accords and the national context in Canada. First, there is no Canadian organization equivalent to the NCVO or SCVO in terms of resources and reputation as *the* national umbrella for the sector as a whole. Although this is not necessarily an impediment to the process, it means that members of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) and JAT will need to work somewhat harder to establish their credibility and that of the process. In this, they will need to work closely with national organizations.

Second, the differences within the sector in Canada are not only split across subsectors (e.g. health, social services, sports and recreation), but by province. The particular focus in Quebec on community action and the greater acceptance of advocacy by the Quebec government is not replicated elsewhere in the country. Thus, in engaging the sector in various regions, particularly Quebec, the national leadership will need to be informed about and attuned to the differences in discourse and practice.

Third, because Canada is a federation, the national leadership of the voluntary sector cannot respond to concerns by community organizations that a national accord holds little relevance or benefit for them by asking them to be patient – that local accords will follow as they have in England. Thus the engagement process will need to show the relevance of a national level accord to the diversity of the sector on its own merits.

No matter how a framework agreement is developed, comparative experience demonstrates the need for a formal monitoring process and ongoing infrastructure within the sector to inform organizations about the agreement, train them in meeting their responsibilities, and monitor compliance. Without a single peak association in Canada, the issue of which organization assumes this role may be more complex than in the UK, particularly in an environment in which the injection of more money than the sector has ever seen may complicate inter-organizational politics. The need to maintain a strong, collegial working relationship among the lead national organizations will be critical.

Finally, international experience reveals the need to maintain ongoing political support. This has not been an issue with the Blair government since it had no negative history with the sector, but may arise in the Canadian context since the Liberals were in power during the nadir of sector-government relations in the mid 1990s.

Making the Most of the Accord for the Voluntary Sector

How can the voluntary sector realize the best case scenario of the accord in which mutual trust is enhanced, the diversity of the sector feels fully engaged in the process so that the sector emerges more cohesive than ever, government practices toward the sector are improved and consistently applied, and the sector develops greater capacity for self governance, accountability and leadership as a sector? In this section, we examine how the sector might make the most out of each of the stages involved in an accord.

Phase I: Development, Engagement and Sign-off

An accord is both a document and a process. One of the primary lessons from other jurisdictions is that process matters. Although the nature of the process may vary, engagement of the broader sector is a critically important aspect. The Joint Table model for developing the accord is a distinctly Canadian variation and, given the positive history in working as a true partnership in getting to the *Working Together* report in 1999, is well suited to the task.

Attention to several procedural matters, as already noted during the full meeting of the Tables in late November, may facilitate its work:

- the ability of the government members to speak freely in the table discussions must be ensured.
- the disruption caused by the need for government members to stop the process at times to get approval of the ADM Steering Committee or the Reference Group of Ministers should be minimized.
- the information which government keeps confidential from the sector members should be minimal, if any such withholding is required at all.
- the accountability relationships of individual members and the tables themselves should be as transparent as possible.
- the Table members will need to remain committed to the process, attending meetings on a regular basis and participating in consultations as required.

The responsibility for addressing these operational issues common to all Tables falls mainly to the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC), but early clarification of them can create a positive working environment at the JAT.

The actual drafting process is not a particularly contentious issue as the staff of the Task Force or the Voluntary Sector secretariat can hold the pen on drafts, under the immediate supervision of the JAT Co-chairs. What is important is that the JAT members carefully review and discuss each draft, considering both general issues and particular language until appropriate compromises and consensus are reached.

Developing the Content of an Accord

There seems to be general agreement on the format of an accord, consisting of a statement of shared vision, principles to guide the relationship, mutual undertakings articulated in a general way for both sides, and provisions for a secondary phase of implementing more specialized codes of conduct. The existing agreements and the mock accords developed for the VSTF provide strong guidance on content so that it should be relatively easy to develop a shared vision and set of principles. Where things may become more tricky is around three potential commitments that relate to sensitive matters for the sector as a whole. The first is advocacy since this is a hot button for most of the sector and Cabinet was not willing to allow the VSI to grapple with it directly in a joint manner. Will the draft explicitly recognize the legitimacy of public policy advocacy by voluntary organizations? The existing accord-like documents vary considerably on this, with those of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Quebec giving specific attention to advocacy and campaigning as a distinctive characteristic of the voluntary sector.

A second issue is funding, for the same reasons as advocacy. Although a supplemental code developed in the implementation phase in Year 2 may spell out specific commitments, will a general statement of the approach to funding be articulated in the accord itself? Again, the existing models vary from quite detailed discussion in England's compact and in the Quebec government's commitments to minimal mention in some of the others.

The third area that may be contentious is a provision for evaluation. Statements regarding expectations around evaluation, performance management and report-back mechanisms are contained in several of the existing accords/frameworks (see those of Quebec and Scotland). Evaluation is a difficult issue for many voluntary organizations given the pressures they are under from governments and other funders to produce performance evaluation reports as a requisite part of contract or project funding, often without adequate resources to do so. Although the sector supports evaluation in a general way, if and how it is dealt with in an accord may raise concerns about increased administrative burden and whether "evaluation" is a code word for outcome measurement.

Finally, a key issue is the monitoring, reporting and complaints processes that make the agreement durable and evergreen. A very effective reporting and monitoring process has been developed in England and Scotland that is worth emulating. In these compacts, however there was no agreement or

attempt respectively to spell out a dispute resolution mechanism. As a result, the section on resolution of disagreements is quite vague, putting off the development of mechanisms to strengthen the complaints and redress processes to future consideration. Even if the JAT consciously chooses to take an incremental approach to determining how complaints will be addressed, the sector will probably need some clarification of the various ways in which a complaint about conduct by a government department could be made.

Creation of a reference group, currently being put together from the nominees to the Tables who were not selected, should help to provide ongoing feedback to the voluntary sector members during the drafting and engagement stages about how various elements would play in the broader sector. The reference group should be charged with the responsibility, and given resources if necessary, to consult with their broader networks and constituencies, so that wider opinion is canvassed and broader circles of the sector are gradually introduced into the process.

Engaging the Sector and the Federal Government

The stakes and needs of the voluntary sector members of the JAT in the engagement process are different from those of the government members. The engagement process is not just about collecting information on what the broader sector would like to see in an accord, but it is about relationship building, in particular, about the relationship of the sector leadership with the rest of the sector, and about developing a sense of the sector's ownership of the accord process. Although government JAT members need to participate whole heartedly in the engagement process, the sector members have a responsibility to demonstrate their credibility with the diversity of the sector that government members will not experience in the same way. They need to be able to address the questions: Why are you at the Table? Who do you represent? Why should we support you in this process? Such relationship building is not done by workbooks or questionnaires alone. Rather, it demands an engagement process involving opportunities for real two-way dialogue and feedback from the JAT members that the differences within the sector are appreciated.

The operational questions for the engagement process are: At what stage to engage the sector? Whom to consult? By what means? Experience from the Broadent Panel and from other jurisdictions that have developed framework agreements suggests the wisdom of engaging the sector on a draft of an accord. Although it has to be clear that the draft is still amenable to change, people respond well to something concrete, particularly in this case as many would have difficulty imagining the specifics of an accord in the abstract.

On the question of who to engage, it must be remembered that an accord has implications for the sector as a whole, even for organizations that do not have a direct relationship with the federal government, because it will affect how the sector self-regulates and communicates. Thus, the focus of

the engagement process should be as broad a diversity of the sector as can possibly be engaged. It might start with, but should not be limited to national organizations.

Real engagement does not happen by flying in and out for a single meeting. Ideas often need to percolate before a truly productive discussion can be had. With this in mind, the process might begin with a series of regional gatherings that are organized by the VSR without the presence of JAT members. The intent would be to begin thinking about the nature of an accord, its implications and the agenda(s) that local and regional organizations would like to set for relationship building. This would pave the way for regional meetings in which JAT members, both government and voluntary sector, are able to undertake a dialogue. The Broadbent model of asking a local host organization to invite a diverse cross-section of representatives of the sector to a meeting works well not only in getting people to attend the event, but in developing local momentum and promoting continuing contact.

National organizations can also be helpful in working in a more vertical manner through their own networks, facilitating their own discussions and providing feedback. Because the national offices of these organizations generally have more policy capacity (limited as it may be) than other organizations in the sector, direct consultations with them can provide valuable information.

Regional meetings and consultations with national organizations can be supplemented by various other means that allow people to provide input, as suggested in the draft consultation frameworks already developed for the VSTF. The key point is that the engagement process cannot be perceived to be just another big government “road show;” rather, it must be a genuine attempt by the national leadership and the JAT to have a dialogue about the relationship and how it is expressed in an accord.

Several questions are likely to arise consistently, particularly from community based organizations, in this process:

- to whom will an accord apply: the charitable subsector, all voluntary organizations, nonprofits more generally?
- how will a national accord affect the work of my organization and why should I care?
- won't an accord simply impose more bureaucracy and administrative burden – in accountability, reporting and evaluation?

Unlike the engagement process in England, the sector leadership cannot advise grassroots organizations to wait for a second round that will produce agreements with local governments which may be more directly relevant to them. It is possible, however, that a successful national accord could

stimulate provinces and municipalities to emulate the process. In spite of whether the JAT members can be helpful in prompting local action, the reality of federalism means that they will need to be prepared to answer directly, the question of “what’s in it for my organization?”

The engagement process cannot focus solely on the voluntary sector, however. The experience with relationships and practices is in many respects as varied across government departments as it is across the sector. The implementation of the compacts in the UK reveals that one of the biggest potential hurdles is that departments lack knowledge about the agreement and are reluctant or see no reason to change existing practices to comply. To avoid this scenario, a simultaneous process will need to engage senior and front line government officials in a wide range of departments in a dialogue with JAT members about how the draft can be modified and implemented to best meet their needs. This proved to be an important step in the process in England where it was led by government. In the Canadian context, it might be useful to have some discussions that involve only government JAT members and others that include the voluntary sector members as well so that any concerns from the government side are fully understood by the entire Table.

The practical problem will be how to make the engagement process manageable for the members of the JAT since dialogue with the sector and government departments necessarily involves them directly. There is no easy way around this: time will need to be committed, supported by supervisors, and the commitments met so that each of the JAT members attends probably five or six sessions in total.

Signing Off

Because an accord is often assimilated to a contract, considerable attention has focussed on who should sign off on the final agreement on behalf of the sector. But, an accord is not a contract, nor is it the equivalent of a collective bargaining situation in which the union leaders need to seek ratification by the membership. If the engagement process has succeeded in creating a genuine dialogue in which the process is regarded by most of the sector as legitimate and the voluntary sector JAT members as credible representatives, then who signs should not be a particularly controversial point. It would be natural that all the members of the JAT sign, with the government’s consent officially sanctioned by Ministers and Parliament. An equivalent endorsement might be considered for the sector. The boards of voluntary organizations could submit their endorsement to the JAT in writing or electronically.²⁰ This would not be a vote with a required threshold to pass, but more in the nature of symbolic support. This approach was rejected in both England and Scotland, largely due to the relatively uncontested authority of NCVO and SCVO respectively to sign on behalf of the sector. Given the more diffuse structure of the sector in Canada, however, such an endorsement could be a useful step in reconnecting the voluntary sector members at the JAT to the sector as a whole and of reinforcing the important notion of the autonomy of the sector. An official signing ceremony could mark the achievement and permit the historic event to be shared outside the Ottawa circle.

Phase II: Development of Codes of Good Practice

The second year of the accord process normally involves the development of specific codes of good conduct for government and the sector. The advantage of this two-step process is that the general framework agreement does not get bogged down with detail, and eventual agreement on such detail is more likely to be achieved in the light of success in reaching an accord on shared vision and principles. The JAT seems prepared, wisely, to follow this model and to use the same joint process for developing the codes of good practice as will produce the accord itself.

The development of codes of conduct would benefit from a good knowledge of existing practices by governments and their impact on voluntary organizations, and of understanding what kinds of practices would better facilitate the work of voluntary organizations. This is best done through a commissioned piece of research than garnered more experientially or casually through the consultation process. Because such research will take time to complete and communicate, the JAT would need to commission it even before the initial accord is signed. The results of this research should then be fed back to voluntary organizations through the sector's multiple networks and to government departments for comment.

Once codes are drafted, another engagement process should follow similar to the original one on the accord itself.

In many respects, agreement on codes of good conduct will affect how the relationship between government departments and voluntary organizations is experienced on a daily basis to a greater degree than the accord itself. Such codes will also necessitate some important measures of capacity building within the sector. If we assume, based on the experience of the UK compacts, that at least the areas of funding and consultation practices are covered by good practice guides, then there are likely to be pressures on the sector to:

- comply with the codes and demonstrate that organizations are doing so;
- encourage development of strong memberships and good membership and democratic practices in order to participate actively in consultation and to demonstrate who the organization represents;
- develop better policy capacity in the sector as a whole and obtain the resources to support policy analysis, research and information gathering;

- build stronger bridges to more marginalized parts of the sector including between English Canada and Quebec, with women's groups, minorities and the socially excluded;²¹
- develop better capacity to work in both official languages and in other languages, as appropriate;
- be able to evaluate and communicate the effectiveness of their consultation practices;
- develop stronger management/control systems and employment policies; and
- if funding practices routinely start to cover the costs of training of volunteers and evaluation, be capable of providing such training and evaluation.

Most of these things the sector needs to do anyway if it is going to have a serious role in governance and in promoting active citizenship, but the pressures will be more explicit under codes of conduct. These longer term matters of capacity building are issues that will need to be considered in a collaborative way by the national umbrella organizations and in the broader VSI. They also have implications for reform of government institutions since support for good governance and accountability is one aspect of consumer service provided by the federal regulatory agency. Therefore, the needs of the sector, particularly smaller organizations, in being able to meet the governance challenges created by codes under the accord should be taken into consideration in making recommendations on changes to the mandate and form of the regulatory body.

Phase III: Monitoring, Reporting and Compliance

The stage of monitoring and reporting on how well government departments and voluntary organizations are adhering to the accord and codes of good practice, and promoting compliance requires the creation of more permanent machinery. As experience elsewhere has demonstrated, several mechanisms are required for effective monitoring and compliance:

- the requirement of an annual report to Parliament, and through Parliament to the sector, on the state of the relationship that surveys and reports on how government departments and voluntary organizations are meeting the undertakings of the accord. Resources for the collection and analysis of such information will need to be booked as part of the VSI.
- a joint working group that has responsibility for producing this report;

- an annual meeting between sector leaders and key ministers and senior officials that results in agreement on an action plan for improvements in the relationship as needed;
- an administrative unit within the federal government that has sufficient credibility with departments that it can promote consistency in practices and that is backed with adequate Ministerial clout that it can command compliance. Such a unit might also be the vehicle for hearing complaints about inappropriate conduct from either side, although this has not been tested in jurisdictions with a framework agreement in place. The unit needs to be centrally placed, rather than in a line department where it would lack the requisite credibility with other departments.²² The natural home of such a unit would be in a central agency, probably the Privy Council Office as a continuation of the Voluntary Sector Task Force. However, housing an interdepartmental coordinating unit would be an uneasy fit for the PCO in its role as secretariat to Cabinet. But, there is no obvious alternative home. The placement and mandate of this unit will be critical to the ongoing monitoring of the accord and thus the VSR and JAT should be prepared to have a position on this.
- ongoing development by a lead organization(s) in the sector that publicizes the accord, informs voluntary organizations of their responsibilities under it and provides access to training for improving practices. Experience in England has shown the importance of ongoing development: the first annual survey of the sector following the implementation of the compact revealed that although most of the sector was well aware of the compact and its scope, there was a lack of understanding about the benefits that it could bring to voluntary and community organizations and only 8 percent had found it useful so far in their dealings with government. The NCVO has hired a full-time Compact Development Office to lead the ongoing information and training initiative. The VSR will need to develop a plan and secure resources for similar development activities and decide in which organization(s) this staff support will be placed.

None of the existing agreements have yet developed a satisfactory, visible mechanism for registering complaints, although such a process is in the process of evolving. As noted above, the JAT may wish to consider in advance how the process might work for dealing with complaints about practices of both government departments and voluntary organizations.

What kinds of complaints are likely to arise? In the UK, the issues that have been brought forward by the sector to date relate to funding practices (in this case by the Department of Health) and were quite quickly addressed. In the Canadian context, issues related to both funding and consultation can be

expected to arise as these are the areas in which government practices most directly impact the everyday activities of voluntary organizations.

In proposing an accord in the first place, the Joint Tables' *Working Together* report suggested that it should be 'evergreen,' that is capable of evolving as the relationship matures. As a *framework* agreement, an accord should have sufficient inherent flexibility to allow such natural evolution, but the JAT might want to consider incorporating a more formal provision in the accord for periodic joint review, say every five years.

The final consideration in the ongoing monitoring process is managing expectations. Knowledge about the accord will take time to be diffused throughout the sector, and relationships and practices will not be changed overnight. Nor can the accord alone change the relationship. If the first annual report or two do not yet show major changes, the accord should not be regarded as a failure. A important role of the sector's leadership in this stage will be to continue to build knowledge and support for the accord, but also to prevent overly optimistic expectations from derailing the change that is likely to unfold over time.

Conclusion

In the midst of a complex process, it is sometimes easy to lose sight of how significant a change in direction the federal government's participation in the VSI represents for the voluntary sector. After all, it was only a few years ago that the federal government was slashing funding and dismissing voluntary organizations as "special interests." The current interest in the sector is not likely to pass quickly because it is one manifestation of a shift in the nature of governance from governing mainly through programming, centred in traditional departmental hierarchies, to governing through collaboration that necessitates relationship building with partners and coordination across departments. The development of an accord is an important element in relationship building that can be enormously positive for the sector by recognizing its autonomy, building mutual trust and shared expectations, and putting in place better and more consistent practices for how the relationship is lived on a daily basis.

An accord is also an opportunity – indeed, it will demand – relationship building by the national level of the sector with the diversity of the community level. For the accord to produce the best possible results for the sector as a whole, three things need to be considered up front. The first is the **content** of the accord: What are the key aspects of the relationships that the sector at all levels would like to change and how can these be encoded? What kinds of monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanisms would give the accord continued relevance and influence in shaping how government departments and voluntary organizations actually behave? How can the accord be made a living document not one encumbered by the period it was developed?

Engagement of the sector in the process is the second key element. The legitimacy of the process and the credibility of the leadership at the JAT rests largely on how truly engaged the rest of the sector feels. Indeed, considerable damage could be done to the sector's leadership and its efforts over the past five years to create a stronger, more cohesive sector if the grassroots feel that the accord is just an Ottawa exercise. Thus, the interests of the voluntary sector members of the JAT in the engagement phase are not the same as those of their government counterparts, and the process needs to be sensitive to making it constructive for relationship building within the sector.

Finally, the accord means that the sector, over the longer term, will need to begin to develop the **capacity** to fulfil its role as an equal partner in the relationship. An accord implies stronger measures of accountability and self-regulation within the sector, appropriate means of evaluation, inclusive and democratic practices, better cross-sectoral communication, stronger policy analytical capacity, and enhanced training and skills development. This may require some structural and procedural changes, but more than anything rests on strong leadership, particularly collaboration and cooperation among national organizations. The sector is already moving in the direction of thinking and acting more like a *sector*. An accord need not impose unnecessary burdens, but could provide an additional impetus for developing as a strong, cohesive sector better able to serve more complex community needs and promote more active citizenship.

Notes

1. Rt. Hon. Jack Straw and Sir Kenneth Stowe, "Joint Foreword," *Compact: Getting it Right Together: Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England*. (London: Home Office and the Voluntary and Community Sector Working Group on Government Relations, 1998), p. 11.

2. Government of Canada - Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative, *Working Together: Report of the Joint Tables*. (Ottawa: Privy Council Office and Voluntary Sector Roundtable, 1999), p. 25.

3. Quoted in Patrick Johnston, 'Strengthening Voluntary Sector/Government Relations in Canada', Paper presented to the Independent Sector 2000 Annual Conference Pre-Session, Washington DC, October 2000, p. 9.

4. See Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

5. Civil society is defined by Walzer as naming "the space of uncoerced human association and

also the set of relational networks – formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology – that fill this space.” See Michael Walzer, “The Civil Society Argument,” in Gersohn Shafir, ed., *The Citizenship Debates: A Reader*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 291-2. For a discussion of the transition within the sector, see Susan D. Phillips, “Voluntary Sector - Government Relationships in Transition: Learning from International Experience for the Canadian Context,” in Kathy Brock and Keith G. Banting, eds., *The Nonprofit Sector in Canada*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, forthcoming).

6. Working Group on Government Relations, “Annual Meeting to Review the Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England: Action Plan for Implementing the Compact in 2000/01” (London: NCVO, April 2000).

7. A framework agreement has also begun to be developed in New Zealand, Portugal and the United Nations. New Zealand’s government has recently completed the first phase of consulting with the community and voluntary sectors, through it’s Ministry of Social Policy. A working party, with representation from both government and the voluntary sector, was created in August 2000, with a goal of developing a framework for an agreement between, and to strengthen the relationship with, the Government and the community and voluntary sector. The call for such an agreement came from the Community Sector Roundtable, a group of voluntary sector leaders from national organizations formed in 1996. The length of the preliminary phase, which initially was to be four months, has been extended and there is no clear time frame as to when and how the process will unfold. Information is drawn from the website of New Zealand’s Ministry of Social Policy unless otherwise noted. This website is located at <http://www.mosp.govt.nz/voluntary/>. See also Patrick Hanley, “Third Sector and State Partnerships: Perspectives from the New Zealand Community Sector”, a paper delivered to Third Sector and State Partnerships Conference, Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights, Deakin University, Melbourne, p. 2.

8. Sir Kenneth Stowe, Presentation to the Annual Conference of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. Toronto, April 1999. Transcript provided by Bowden’s Media Monitoring Ltd., p. 11.

9. These codes lay out quite detailed guidelines for practice. For instance, the Code of Good Practice for funding states that in order to promote fair access to funding, the government should among other things, “aim to publish an annual guide to Government grant programmes;” and “consult relevant voluntary and community organisations on the development of new funding programmes.” See *Funding: A Code of Good Practice* (London: Home Office and Working Group on Government Relations, NCVO, 2000).

10. Other than the process of devolution which was unfolding at the time, a particular concern in Scotland was that it has many more quangos or statutory bodies (crown corporations) than England which affects government’s relationship with the sector in particular ways.

11. Since a form of framework agreements already existed between local authorities and the

sector, there has been no need to develop these in Scotland.

12. Note that in the creation of new political institutions that are necessitated by devolution, Scotland is attempting to make greater use of parliamentary committees than has been the tradition in England.

13. The review of charity law is being conducted by an independent commission, the McFadden Commission, established by the Scottish Executive. Its focus has remarkable similarity to the issues raised by the Broadbent panel—notable, definition of charity, supervisory institutions, and regulatory reform.

14. Government of the Republic of Ireland, National Anti-Poverty Strategy, *A White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 2000).

15. Information on South Africa's initiatives are drawn from the website of SANGOCO, located at <http://www.sangoco.org.za/about.html>.

16. "Government - NGO partnerships: Some Emerging Lessons & Insights", unpublished paper by the Development Resources Centre for South Africa, September 1999.

17. In English see, Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome du Québec, *The Community Network: A Key Player in Québec's Development: Summary of the Consultation Document*. (Québec: SACA, April 2000). The report of the consultations by Gérard Larose was released in November 2000. See <http://www.saca.gouv.qc.ca>.

18. Information on Newfoundland's Strategic Social Plan were drawn from a presentation by Penelope Rowe to Queen's University's First Annual Conference of the Public Policy and Third Sector Initiative, delivered October 21, 2000 and entitled "Newfoundland And Labrador's Strategic Social Plan: Forging a New Model for Collaborative Government-Third Sector Action", along with press releases from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, dated from 1997 and 1998.

19. See Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, *People, Partners and Prosperity: A Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's, 1998). Available at <http://www.gov.nf.ca/ssp/>

20. In keeping with the principle of respecting the self governing autonomy of the sector, such endorsement should be made by the boards of voluntary organizations.

21. For instance, the English Code on Consultation and Policy Appraisal establishes an undertaking by voluntary organizations to "take account positively of specific needs, interests and contributions of women, minority groups and the socially excluded."

22. In England, this unit is the Active Communities Unit which, although housed in the Home Office, is established under not only the Minister responsible for the Home Office, but the Minister of State at the Cabinet Office as well. In Scotland, the unit was centrally placed in the Scottish Executive, but has recently moved to a Social Justice portfolio. Quebec has created the Secrétariat à l'Action Communautaire autonome du Québec (SACA) with an extensive mandate for coordination to lead implementation.